

FW: Black women are unequivocally overreprese...

**Subject:** FW: Black women are unequivocally overrepresented among women dying while homeless in the County and City of Los Angeles

**From:** Heidi Marston <hmarston@lahsa.org>

**Date:** 7/28/20, 12:56 PM

**To:** Ahmad Chapman <achapman@lahsa.org>, Christopher Yee <cyee@lahsa.org>

Let's think about how to build this into our comms



**Heidi Marston, MPA**

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**From:** Joe Colletti - Urban Initiatives <JoeColletti@Urban-Initiatives.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 28, 2020 12:39 PM

**To:** Heidi Marston <hmarston@lahsa.org>

**Subject:** FW: Black women are unequivocally overrepresented among women dying while homeless in the County and City of Los Angeles

Heidi - just wanted to make you aware of our report below. Also, we asked Dhakshike to send our report to Ad Hoc Committee on Black Persons Experiencing Homelessness and she said she would. Be well.



**Joe Colletti, PhD**

**Chief Executive Officer**

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[Hub for Urban Initiatives](http://HubforUrbanInitiatives.org)

[Homeless and Housing Strategies for California](http://HomelessandHousingStrategiesforCalifornia.org)

"To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause" from the song *Impossible Dream*

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**From:** HomelessStrategy.com - Joe Colletti <joecolletti@urban-initiatives.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 21, 2020 7:34 AM

**To:** Joe Colletti - Urban Initiatives <JoeColletti@Urban-Initiatives.org>

**Subject:** Black women are unequivocally overrepresented among women dying while homeless in the County and City of Los Angeles

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## **Black Women Dying Homeless in Los Angeles City and County**

*Black women are unequivocally overrepresented among women dying while homeless in the County and City of Los Angeles*

[Sofia Herrera, PhD](#)  
[Joe Colletti, PhD](#)  
[Hub for Urban Initiatives](#)  
[Homeless and Housing Strategies for California](#)  
July 2020

*A Black woman-centered trauma-informed care approach needs to be fully considered for Black women who become homeless*

Click [here](#) for a pdf copy of the following report

This report is based on publicly accessible data from the County of Los Angeles Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner (ME-Coroner) related to homelessness.

Acquired data from the Public Services Division reveals that 1,715 persons, who were examined by the ME-Coroner between 2018 and 2019, were noted as "indigent - homeless" under "type of residence" because the person did not have an established residence or the person was found in a location that suggested homelessness such as an encampment, field, park, alley, and sidewalk.

Of the 1,715 persons, 337 (20%) were women who died while homeless in Los Angeles County. Among the 337 women, 135 or 40% died while homeless in the City of Los Angeles, and 202 or 60% died while homeless in other cities or unincorporated areas and communities in Los Angeles County.

### **Findings:**

#### Los Angeles County (including City of Los Angeles)

Black women are unequivocally overrepresented among women dying while homeless in Los Angeles County. As noted in Chart 1 below,

- Black women represented 9% of the total number of women living in Los Angeles County during 2018 and 2019. However, during the same period, 30% or 100 of the 337 women who died homeless in Los Angeles County were Black.

In contrast,

- Hispanic/Latinas represented 47% of the total number of women living in Los Angeles County during 2018 and 2019. However, during the same period, 29% or 96 of the 337 women who died homeless in Los Angeles County were Hispanic/Latinas; and
- White women represented 50% of the total number of women living in Los Angeles County during 2018 and 2019. However, during the same period, 37% or 125 of the

337 women who died homeless in Los Angeles County were White.

Chart 1. Race and Hispanic Origin: Los Angeles County



City of Los Angeles

Black women are also unequivocally over-represented among women dying while homeless in the City of Los Angeles. As noted in Chart 2 below,

- Black women represented 10% of the total number of

women living in the City of Los Angeles during 2018 and 2019. However, during the same period, 42% or 56 of the 135 women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles were Black.

In contrast,

- Hispanic/Latinas represented 48% of the total number of women living in the City of Los Angeles during 2018 and 2019. However, during the same period, 23% or 31 of the 135 women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles were Hispanic/Latinas; and
- White women represented 49% of the total number of women living in the City of Los Angeles during 2018 and 2019. However, during the same period, 30% or 41 of the 135 women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles were White.

Chart 2. Race and Hispanic Origin: City of Los Angeles

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Table 1 provides the percent of the total number of women living in Los Angeles County and the percent of women who died homeless in Los Angeles County during 2018 and 2019 by race and Hispanic origin.

Table 1 also provides the percent of the total number of women living in the City of Los Angeles and the percent of women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles during 2018 and 2019 by race and Hispanic origin.

Table 1. Race and Hispanic Origin

|                                         | Los Angeles County                        |                                           | City of Los Angeles                        |                                            |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
|                                         | % of Total # of Women Living in LA County | % of Women Who Died Homeless in LA County | % of Total # of Women Living in City of LA | % of Women Who Died Homeless in City of LA |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native          | 1                                         | .3                                        | 1                                          | 1                                          |
| Asian                                   | 14                                        | 1                                         | 12                                         | 2                                          |
| Black                                   | 9                                         | 30                                        | 10                                         | 42                                         |
| Hispanic/Latina                         | 47                                        | 29                                        | 48                                         | 23                                         |
| Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 0                                         | .3                                        | .2                                         | 1                                          |
| White                                   | 50                                        | 37                                        | 49                                         | 30                                         |
| Multi-Racial/Other                      | 26                                        | 2                                         | 28                                         | 2                                          |

### Black Women: Age

Los Angeles County (including City of Los Angeles)

A significant majority of the 100 Black women who died homeless in the County of Los Angeles were age 50+. As noted in Table 2 below,

- 59% or 59 of the 100 Black women who died homeless in the County of Los Angeles were age 50+.

Table 2. Age Groups for All Black Women

| Age Group | Los Angeles County |    |              | City of Los Angeles |    |              |
|-----------|--------------------|----|--------------|---------------------|----|--------------|
|           | #                  | %  | Cumulative % | #                   | %  | Cumulative % |
| 18 - 24   | 0                  | 0  | 0            | 0                   | 0  | 0            |
| 25 - 29   | 5                  | 5  | 5            | 2                   | 4  | 4            |
| 30 - 39   | 15                 | 15 | 20           | 6                   | 11 | 15           |
| 40 - 49   | 21                 | 21 | 41           | 13                  | 23 | 38           |

|               |            |            |            |           |            |            |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 50+           | 59         | 59         | 100        | 35        | 62         | 100        |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>56</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> |

### City of Los Angeles

A significant majority of the 56 Black women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles were age 50+. As noted in Table 2 above,

- 62% or 35 of the 59 Black women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles were age 50+.

### **Black Women: Seniors Age 55+**

### Los Angeles County (including City of Los Angeles)

A significant number of the Black women who died homeless in the County of Los Angeles were seniors age 55+. As noted in Table 3 below,

- 43 or 43% of Black women who died homeless in the County of Los Angeles were seniors age 55+;
  - 26 or 26% were age 55 - 61;
  - 17 or 17% were age 62 - 69; and
  - 1 or 1% were age 70+.

Table 3. Age Groups for Black Women Age 55+

| <b>Age Group</b> | <b>Los Angeles County</b> |            | <b>City of Los Angeles</b> |            |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|
|                  | <b>#</b>                  | <b>%</b>   | <b>#</b>                   | <b>%</b>   |
| 18 - 54          | 57                        | 57         | 29                         | 52         |
| <b>Subtotal:</b> | <b>57</b>                 | <b>57</b>  | <b>29</b>                  | <b>52</b>  |
| 55 - 61          | 26                        | 26         | 18                         | 32         |
| 62 - 69          | 17                        | 17         | 8                          | 14         |
| 70+              | 1                         | 1          | 1                          | 2          |
| <b>Subtotal:</b> | <b>43</b>                 | <b>43</b>  | <b>27</b>                  | <b>48</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>100</b>                | <b>100</b> | <b>56</b>                  | <b>100</b> |

## City of Los Angeles

A significant number of the Black women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles were seniors age 55+. As noted in Table 3 above,

- 27 or 48% of Black women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles were seniors age 55+;
  - 18 or 32% were age 55 - 61;
  - 8 or 14% were age 62 - 69; and
  - 1 or 2% were age 70+.

### **Black Women: Place of Death**

A significant number of Black women died homeless in public spaces in the County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles as listed in Table 4:

#### Los Angeles County (including City of Los Angeles)

- 42 or 42% of the 100 Black women who died homeless in the County of Los Angeles died in a variety of public spaces-alley (4 or 4%); bus bench or public bench (3 or 3%); field (1 or 1%); laundromat (1 or 1%); park (1 or 1%); parking lot (3 or 3%); railroad tracks (3 or 3%); shed (1 or 1%); sidewalk (15 or 15%); stairwell (1 or 1%); street (4 or 4%); tent (2 or 2%); "transient" encampment (2 or 2%); and walkway (1 or 1%);

#### City of Los Angeles

- 27 or 48% of the 56 Black women who died homeless in the City of Los Angeles died in a variety of public spaces-alley (2 or 3.6%); bus bench or public bench (3 or 5.3%); field (1 or 1.8%); park (1 or 1.8%); parking lot (3 or 3.6%); railroad tracks (1 or 1.8%); sidewalk (13 or 23.2%); tent (2 or 3.6%); "transient" encampment (1 or 1.8%); and walkway (1 or 1.8%).

Table 4. Black Women: Place of Death (as designated by the

## Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner)

| Place of Death            | Los Angeles County |            | City of Los Angeles |            |
|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
|                           | #                  | %          | #                   | %          |
| Alley                     | 4                  | 4.0        | 2                   | 3.6        |
| Bus Bench or Public Bench | 3                  | 3.0        | 3                   | 5.3        |
| Field                     | 1                  | 1.0        | 1                   | 1.8        |
| Hospice                   | 1                  | 1.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| Hospital                  | 37                 | 37.0       | 19                  | 33.9       |
| Hotel/Motel               | 3                  | 3.0        | 1                   | 1.8        |
| Jail                      | 1                  | 1.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| Laundromat                | 1                  | 1.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| Park                      | 1                  | 1.0        | 1                   | 1.8        |
| Parking Lot               | 3                  | 3.0        | 2                   | 3.6        |
| Private Residence         | 7                  | 7.0        | 4                   | 7.1        |
| Railroad Tracks           | 3                  | 3.0        | 1                   | 1.8        |
| Residence                 | 1                  | 1.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| School/College            | 1                  | 1.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| Shed                      | 1                  | 1.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| Shelter                   | 3                  | 3.0        | 3                   | 5.3        |
| Sidewalk                  | 15                 | 15.0       | 13                  | 23.2       |
| Sober Living Facility     | 1                  | 1.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| Stairwell                 | 1                  | 1.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| Street                    | 4                  | 4.0        | 0                   | 0.0        |
| Tent                      | 2                  | 2.0        | 2                   | 3.6        |
| "Transient" Encampment    | 2                  | 2.0        | 1                   | 1.8        |
| Vehicle                   | 3                  | 3.0        | 2                   | 3.6        |
| Walkway                   | 1                  | 1.0        | 1                   | 1.8        |
| <b>Total:</b>             | <b>100</b>         | <b>100</b> | <b>56</b>           | <b>100</b> |

**Black Women: Mode of Death**

There were four modes of death noted for Black women who died while homeless. They are accident, natural causes, homicide, and suicide.

## Accidents

Approximately two-thirds of Black women who died homeless in the County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles died because of an accident as noted as one of four modes of death in Table 5 below. Accidents include blunt force trauma, carbon monoxide poisoning, choking, septic shock, and effects of drugs.

- Approximately two-thirds (62%) of Black women who died homeless in the **County of Los Angeles** (including the City of Los Angeles) died because of an accident; and
- Approximately two-thirds (66.1%) of Black women who died homeless in the **City of Los Angeles** died because of an accident.

Approximately one-fourth of Black women who died homeless in the County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles died a natural mode of death as noted in the table below. Natural includes causes such as pneumonia, pulmonary thromboembolism, cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure, bacterial endocarditis, and metastatic breast carcinoma and sarcoma.

- Approximately one-fourth (27%) of Black women who died homeless in the **County of Los Angeles** (including the City of Los Angeles) died as a result of natural causes; and
- Approximately one-fourth (26.8%) of Black women who died homeless in the **City of Los Angeles** died as a result of natural causes.

Table 5. Black Women: Mode of Death

| <b>Mode of Death</b> | <b>Los Angeles County</b> |          | <b>City of Los Angeles</b> |          |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|
|                      | <b>#</b>                  | <b>%</b> | <b>#</b>                   | <b>%</b> |
| Accident             | 62                        | 62.0     | 37                         | 66.1     |
| Homicide             | 2                         | 2.0      | 0                          | 0.0      |
| Natural              | 27                        | 27.0     | 15                         | 26.8     |
| Suicide              | 3                         | 3.0      | 0                          | 0.0      |
| Unknown              | 6                         | 6.0      | 4                          | 7.1      |
|                      |                           |          |                            |          |

|       |     |     |    |     |
|-------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Total | 100 | 100 | 56 | 100 |
|-------|-----|-----|----|-----|

Next Steps

The findings in this report adds to the urgency to carry out the recommendations included in the [Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness](#), which was published in December 2018.

The purpose of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness was to:

- 1. examine the factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Black people among the population experiencing homelessness,*
- 2. identify opportunities to increase racial equity within the homeless service delivery system, and*
- 3. develop recommendations to more effectively meet the needs of Black people experiencing homelessness.*

The Ad Hoc Committee developed a robust set of 67 recommendations. As noted in the Executive Summary, the *overarching aims of the recommendations included within this report are to:*

- Improve data collection, analysis, and collaborative research to better understand and track issues affecting Black people experiencing homelessness.*
- Advance racially-equitable policies, programs, and funding across institutions, including LAHSA, homeless service providers, and City and County agencies.*
- Enhance cross-system collaboration and partnerships to more effectively prevent and reduce the time spent in homelessness and improve housing retention and stability for Black people experiencing homelessness.*
- Expand capacity building and training opportunities to ensure service providers understand the impact of institutional racism and racial bias on Black people*

*experiencing homelessness.*

- *Target investments and funding enhancements to initiatives aimed at reducing disparities and ensuring sufficient funding for services and programs supporting Black people experiencing homelessness.*
- *Implement targeted improvements to service delivery within the Los Angeles County CES and other systems of care in which Black people experiencing homelessness are overrepresented, to address barriers and improve outcomes for Black people.*
- *Expand advocacy at federal, state, and local government levels for progressive and racially equitable policies, programs, and (direct or indirect) funding impacting Black people experiencing homelessness.*

### **Conclusion**

Letting Black women die while homeless on the streets will continue until the needs of Black women living homeless are understood better. Homelessness is a traumatizing and re-traumatizing experience.

A homeless Black woman-centered trauma-informed care approach needs to be fully developed.

The Ad Hoc Committee also conducted a series of listening sessions and focus groups to learn firsthand from Black women who have experienced homelessness. Insights about why Black women are unequivocally traumatized and overrepresented among women dying homeless in the County and City of Los Angeles included:

*We have all of these single Black women, [who are] middle-aged, elderly [and] are the number one demographic living in poverty and homelessness. Not just year after year, but decade after decade. What has the system done to address the fact that we have all these single Black women living in poverty [and] homelessness?*

*You are letting us die out here on these streets because the system is not set up [correctly]. You do not have people [who] understand that the needs of a Black woman are not necessarily the same as maybe a White woman or a Mexican woman or so on and so forth. So that is why it upsets me. -Black Woman, Advocate with lived experience at Skid Row listening session*

*For Black women, we have the highest mortality rate during child birth. A lot of that comes from generations and generations of trauma and pain and hurt we are carrying on top of creating life. For us to access care, there has to be some level of trust. Being a Black person, you are not going to be trusting of the many systems. They haven't given us a reason to trust them. -Black Woman at West Adams listening session*

As noted by a Black woman during the Committee's series of listening sessions and focus groups, her experience of homelessness

*cannot be untangled from the impact of institutional and structural racism in education, criminal justice, housing, employment, health care, and access to opportunities. Institutional and structural racism impact Black people experiencing homelessness on a daily, life-long basis, from renting an apartment, to seeking employment, to the trauma of living in an anti-Black society.*

Also noted by a Black woman

*African Americans are disproportionately represented in homelessness because they are [over]represented in every area of disparity in our country. And that goes back to our roots of racism, oppression, and institutional racism. It doesn't change with the category. It is almost expected.*

Also stated in the report was

*a need for trauma-informed care, mental illness care. People with mental health could die because there is no trauma-informed care, police don't know how to handle mental illness or traumatized people.*

A homeless Black woman-centered trauma-informed care approach needs to be fully developed and implemented.

As noted by another Black woman during the Committee's series of listening sessions and focus groups, her experience of homelessness

*cannot be untangled from the impact of institutional and structural racism in education, criminal justice, housing, employment, health care, and access to opportunities. Institutional and structural racism impact Black people experiencing homelessness on a daily, life-long basis, from renting an apartment, to seeking employment, to the trauma of living in an anti-Black society.*

Also noted by a Black woman

*African Americans are disproportionately represented in homelessness because they are [over]represented in every area of disparity in our country. And that goes back to our roots of racism, oppression, and institutional racism. It doesn't change with the category. It is almost expected.*

Also stated in the report was

*a need for trauma-informed care, mental illness care. People with mental health could die because there is no trauma-informed care, police don't know how to handle*

*mental illness or traumatized people.*

Tonight, too many Black women will be sleeping on the streets of Los Angeles City and County. One Black woman will likely die this week while homeless and brought to the ME-Coroner for examination. Another Black Women will likely die homeless the following week, and the week after that. This is exactly what happened during 2018 and 2019 and likely happening in 2020, a year overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One Black woman will likely die of blunt force trauma as the result of a fall, attack, or struck by a vehicle and suffer multiple injuries. Another Black woman will likely die of a natural cause such as pneumonia, pulmonary thromboembolism, cardiovascular disease, congestive heart failure, bacterial endocarditis, or metastatic breast carcinoma and sarcoma. She may also die because of complications due to the COVID-19 disease.

Another Black woman may die due to the combined effects of drugs and alcohol. Another Black woman may be murdered on the streets or commit suicide.

To prevent these deaths, changes must occur at the level of social policy as stated in the report by the Ad Hoc Committee.

As one Black woman expressed during the Skid Row listening session, the system has not done much to address the fact that too many Black women are living in poverty and homelessness not just year after year, but decade after decade.

Homelessness is a traumatizing and re-traumatizing experience for too many Black women who die while living on the streets. For many, their death culminated a life full of trauma from the cradle to the grave.

FW: Black women are unequivocally overreprese...

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